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ABSTRACT

Ten emerging issues in early childhood education (ECE) are explored. The first issue has to do with the societal purpose for early childhood education, the second with the problem of whether ECE personnel are professionals. The third issue concerns the conceptual world view that helps educators see what child development is all about. The fourth issue deals with the problem of apportioning professional education with respect to theory learning, research knowledge, and practical application. Issue five revolves around delivery of programs in classrooms and classroom treatment of children. Issue six concerns how children learn. Issues seven, eight, and nine have to do with the interface between ECE settings and public school settings, social skills building in early education, and parent/teacher cooperation, respectively. The final issue concerns the need for ECE personnel to be politically active in support of the profession. Numerous suggestions for educational practice are offered throughout the discussion. (RH)

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EMERGING ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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"Emerging issues in early childhood education" is an important area for people who work with young children. This topic invites us to range over knowledge domains, professional worries and hopeful events of the past decades in order to think our way through to the future. What are ten emerging issues that we need to be aware of?

What is the Purpose of Early Childhood Education?

The first issue has to do with the societal purpose for early childhood education. Parents are working in unprecedented numbers. Children are going into group care settings at ever younger years (Honig, 1984). The whole question of the purpose of such early care and education becomes extremely acute for us today. Once upon a time, we all knew what a nursery school, a good quality University nursery school, was for. It was a place where parents could bring kids to play and learn for 2½ hours; a place where young women and men could learn to be excellent early childhood educators. But nowadays people are not so sure that this is the purpose of a program. So many people say to me, "I need a place to leave my children, I need to be sure I can get in to work by 8:00 A.M.; I need to be sure in the afternoon that the center will stay open late". Some people are conceiving of early childhood education settings as custodial places that primarily serve working parents. Is that how you see Early Childhood Education? Is that the purpose of it? And much as you might say, "That shocks me; that shouldn't be", still, this is the way many families see our profession. I think we need to talk and dialogue with parents first, because our views of the purpose of child care may differ, and, secondly, because so many early childhood educators really don't like the families they serve. This may be particularly acute for educators who serve children in families that are somewhat harsh or abusive or of low educational level. Some researches suggest that the feelings of early childhood

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educators can be almost adversarial with parents. Caregivers and teachers may report or accuse: "She shouldn't be doing that with her kids" or, "They don't give that child enough time and attention". "He needs a lot more caring, that's why he's acting out in my class". I'm sure you've heard these kinds of statements; maybe you've made some of them. So that we need to be dialoguing about the purposes of early childhood education. Do you have a custodial conceptualization or a developmental conceptualization? Is child care just a service for working parents? Should there always be an enrichment component? I rarely speak in absolutes, but in this case the answer to the number 1 issue, I think, cannot be that we only provide a custodial environment with small children. The needs for early child care are growing. Ever growing numbers of working women with ever younger children are going back into the work force. This is occurring partly because often company policy does not allow mothers to take off more than a few weeks or months from a job. Families are desperately seeking infancy and toddler care and such facilities are increasing at rates higher than for pre-school age children.

Early Childhood Education: Profession or Job?

The second issue that is important has to do with the concept of Early Childhood Education personnel. Do you have a profession or a job? A lot of people that I have met, who work in daycare, feel it's a job. And once they get home they have toddlers of their own and they are tired! And they don't want to put up with little ones crying, and thumb sucking, and needing to be held all day on a hip for possibly the first 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 weeks in daycare. Some little children are needy and distressed at separation from family when they first come into daycare.

This particular issue, then, has to do with professional qualifications and professional attitudes vs. a "job" attitude. Now you may say, "Professional attitude is all very well if we were paid a living wage. But when they consider me a professional at $3.65 an hour and then ask me to come and build booths on Saturday and Sunday - in order to sell baked goods to raise money for scholarships for the center and for this I am not paid at all - then am I really a professional, at

$3.65 an hour! Cleaning ladies and garbage collectors in my city are earning $18,000 a year." I don't know many Early Childhood Educators in day care who earn that kind of money. The issue "Is ECE a job or is ECE a profession," needs to be discussed and it needs to be examined much more in depth. A job is something you can leave at 5:00 and go home. I have social worker friends who earn much more money than day care workers. They work in a hospital with mentally ill people. They go home at 5 o'clock. Their time outside of work belongs to them alone. That's marvelous! Many of us have to go home and we are preparing materials and activities for the next day. Or we're worried sick about Johnny because bruises on his body look suspicious to us as if somebody has been beating on him. Do we tell protective services; do we call parents first? We try to collect egg cartons and other "beautiful junk" from all our friends because we ran out of egg cartons or toilet paper rolls or whatever else was needed for the creation of materials which are supposed to be homemade. Of course it's good for parents to see classroom toys and activities and books that are homemade. True. But wouldn't it be nice, once in a while, if your program had a budget sufficient for the store-bought toys such as Fisher-Price makes? This whole question of "profession versus job" is very interesting. Sure, those of us who are in a profession don't count hours, but can one avoid burnout at $3.65 an hour or $4.00 an hour or $4.50 an hour? That's why so many people say to me - "It's a job!" But child care really can't be considered just a job because children are some of the most mysterious, ornery, beautiful and delicious human beings that God has ever created. Children require all of the professional skills that we can possibly bring to bear upon their problems and their needs. The older I grow the more I think I need to learn professionally about young children. And I know quite a bit!

Now, if we are a profession, then many more questions arise. For example, where is the professional library in your day care center? Where are the materials and books you can bring home at night? Where are the training manuals? Where are the resources, the backup resources for you to be studying more about your profession?

Such training resources need to be supplied not out of your own funds at the salaries you earn. They should be provided for out of funds that government agencies, and private resources in industry and community allocate because they realize that early childhood caregiving is a very important profession for society.

Once we think of child care as a profession, rather than a job, then we need to be thinking about just who can become an Early Childhood Educator. Some of the day care workers accused of rapes of preschoolers had no prerequisite skills for early childhood work. Did they have a "job?" Should <u>they</u> be considered professionals? I got a real insight into how important this issue is when I was teaching about infant daycare at a U.S. Army base in Europe one summer. Some of the directors told me their problems with hiring Early Childhood Educators. One of them reported: "Last week they sent me 8 pinball machine operators, Dr. Honig." I asked, "For early childhood centers for infants and toddlers?" She said, "<u>Yes</u>! Because these men had had a pinball machine operation cut out of one of their bases so they no longer had a job to service those machines; thus, they were first on the list for employment." Then ECE is considered just a job. If you can be a pinball machine operator, run a commissary sales booth, then some people suppose you can take care of infants and toddlers. If just being available is the only requirement then of course, ECE is a job. And indeed at the Army base I was told lots of stories about people who are just waiting for a commissary job to open up but meanwhile decide to do this childcare job. It doesn't pay as well, but no commissary slots are open yet. Such an attitude surely regards ECE positions as jobs and not as professional services.

Should there be licensing? Should you be required to have an elementary K-6 degree? And if you have a K-6 degree does that mean you know anything about the development of tiny little children? I'm not talking about somebody who knows how to do a master stencil for worksheets that a teacher can use to have children draw inside the lines to color a big teddy bear and everyone use a brown crayon please because brown is <u>really</u> the right color for a bear. And what if a toddler chose to use an orange crayon for a Teddy bear?

Staffing requirements pose a dilemma. Some people who have licensure in elementary education may know too little about the socio-emotional developmental needs of toddlers, for example, having temper tantrums or undergoing what Margaret Mahler calls the "Psychological rebirth" of the infant at about 1½ years of life. This rebirth, for example, means that the now-vertical, delightful, walking baby is all of a sudden realizing that she is alone in the world with her own strong emerging will. Her parents often have wishes for her behavior different from her own - different wishes that lead to battles. Mama is a separate person. The merging closeness of the first year of life will nevermore be again. Yet the fight for comfortable independence has just begun. This is a distressing period for toddlers. How many elementary school teachers are trained to be sensitive to such conflicts in the lives of very young children in group care? Sometimes directors prefer someone with a K through 6 degree. Yet how well prepared is such a professional (with education but not child development courses) to cope with toddler troubles?

If early childhood education is a profession, then we need to have specialized training for those who work with young children who are in different stages of development. Caring for a vulnerable infant at a few weeks requires skills in addition to those learned in preparing to teach four year olds. The pressure for child care facilities is strong in society. There is an enormous need for working parents for care for very small children. Now whether society should be supporting parents to stay home and rear very tiny children is an issue over which you and I have very little control. The lives of human beings go on whether we will or not. So this issue is a very important one. What kind of coursework best prepares a professional early childhood specialist? Should refresher courses be required? How many of you are required to take a course in infant development? Language development? Pro-social development? Observation skills? How many ECE programs require a course on research findings that would be helpful to give students more insight into the behaviors in young children? Are the course requirements actually ones that will be

helpful for professional growth? That's another problem in this area. Suppose you have received a credentialing associate degree. Suppose you have worked on the job in child care without a special degree for years. Should you not be allowed into a center because they have decided only to accept "professionals" with a K-6 license?

Potential difficulties abound here. Many wonderful dedicated human beings are working with small children who would never be employable if an elementary license were rigidly required. Nor am I convinced that this is the kind of licensure that should be required. But we need to begin dialogues and thoughtful processes, not "turf jealous" processes.

Just because we have an ECE degree does not mean that we are the only qualified people to teach young children. There are people with child development associate degrees, there are Headstart trained people, there are ordinary human beings without any degrees who do indeed have marvelous skills with very young children.[2] They might be your grandmother or grandfather or one or another of you who don't have a degree in a field but have a gift. Because I believe in gifts. Even with training some people cannot empathize well with little ones. A head teacher with a master's degree came to the edge of the classroom door while the aide was reading to the group. Little Tommy was sucking his thumb and patting his cheek with his special blanket and listening with wide open eyes to the story. His highly trained head teacher came to the door, frowned and shook her head. Tommy dropped the thumb and he dropped the blanket rather quickly. So she was a professional because she had a master's degree. But did she belong in early childhood education as a professional? Did she really understand the needs of a young child for sensuous experiences and how much his ability to suck added to the fervor with which he was really able to listen to that story? We may need to reorganize departments in colleges in order to

[2]See Honig (1979b) for twenty questions you can ask to see whether you or someone you wish to hire can be considered a quality caregiver.

prepare ECE specialists properly to work with the youngest age group, 0-3. Perhaps we've done well enough in training ECE personnel to work with 3-5 year olds. But we need to be thinking about the entire range from 0 to 6 years. So this second emerging issue should push us toward a new look at our preparation requirements.

A Theoretical Framework for Child Development Work

The third issue that I want to talk about has to do with a conceptual world view that will help us see what child development is all about. What psychodynamic or cognitive or curricular model do we have? Some of you may have been brought up in programs that taught you behavioral modification (SR theory) ways to treat a child in order to shape behaviors. Some of you may have been brought up in programs that stress dynamic, psychoanalytic aspects of personality development. Perhaps you learned that it is of little use to treat surface behaviors. The only thing that is really important is what is going on deep underneath ' "Oh, he has a new baby sister in the family", or "He needs to hit and get all that screaming out of his system, and get all that agression out of him or else he will have a spastic colon or he will be repressed in his later childhood", or whatever will happen. Our world view is kind of an important issue. With what world view do you come to the classroom to work with the children? Did you learn Mahlerian theory perhaps from reading Louise Kaplan's book, Oneless and Separateness, that marvelous poetic rendition of Dr. Mahler's theory about how infants and toddlers grow from their first physical birth through their psychological rebirth in the middle of the 2nd year of life (1978). Perhaps you learned social learning theory. Do you really understand about how important adults are as live or TV models for young children? Once a few years ago in a first grade classroom, the children had to write stories about whom they wished to be like. Teachers wrote down each child's wish. All around the edges of the room there were little stories: "I want to be batman", "I want to be superman", I want to be bionic man", "I want to be wonder woman", "I want to jump 6 million miles to the moon". It was very interesting to me. Who are models for children? "I want to be the Hulk." A little boy in a day care center proudly informed me, "I can do

dancing just like Michael Jackson" and he proceeded to wiggle his behind quite suggestively. He was all of 3½ years old and he was already doing beautiful sexual gyrations, modeled after an adult "star". Indeed, who are the models for our children?

We know from social learning theory how powerful models are. Haven't you met little kids that stand just like papa? Little kids who scold dolls just like mama scolds or cajole for special priviliges just as they observe in their families. Social learning researches by Bandura and by Sears (see Honig, 1983) emphasize the power of modelling theory. Thus, it is extremely important to study theories of child development. ECE coursework should provide opportunities to study Freudian theory, social learning theory, Stimulus-Response theory, Gesell's ideas. Gesell's work has comforted countless parents with the message about a child's stages, "Oh well, if it's real bad now it's bound to get better". Behavior goes in waves - more organized, then disint grating, or oppositional, then more rounded, more integrate

Erikson's theory (1980) is critical for ECE specialists. Erikson describes eight nuclear struggles that little ones go through and little ones grow through as they deal with these nuclear conflicts throughout life. Perceptive effective caregivers help children resolve these conflicts more on the positive than the negative pole. ECE specialists need to know Eri ksonian theory well. The first great nuclear conflict, during a baby's first 2 years of life, has to do with the building of a sense of basic trust: "The world's not a bad place to grow up in. It's worthwhile learning to wipe the snot from my nose, on a tissue instead of my sleeve; eat with a fork and a knife; make on a potty instead of in my diapers; say please and thank you. All of those awful peculiar things that grown-ups insist on. It's worthwhile because, you know what, when I'm hungry they feed me; when I need company they pick me up and burble nice loving things at me; when I need a hug or a hold they cuddle me; and when I am in distress they don't let me lie there crying a long time. They come and fix it up."

That great nuclear conflict of basic trust vs. mistrust of the first year of life reappears with all its demons over and over again in school classrooms. Many children don't trust the helping adults called teachers. How many of you have worked in high school classrooms where half of the youngsters looked at you as if you are "the enemy"? Adults are the enemy. What happened to these children in the first year of life? What happened during their first Eriksonian nuclear conflict of learning that grown-ups are trustable: "Grown-ups trust my signals. If I give a loud yell they come pretty quick and help me feel better. Grown-ups kind of trust themselves. They seem to know how to pick me up and comfort me and feed me, and change me, and play with me, and entertain me, and look at me with shining eyes." It is troubling in our society that in many classrooms growing children do not trust that there's going to be something interesting or worthwhile or vibrant or learnable or relevant to their life that a teacher can do, or say, or show.

We need to know also about Erikson's second nuclear conflict in the toddler period, and the third conflict that characterizes the pre-school period. During these growing stages, the child learns to assert a will of his/her own different from everybody else's. A child learns that it's okay to have wishes that are different from everybody else's. A child learns to take initiatives and responsibility for choices made. The outcome of these nuclear conflicts is an assertive sense of autonomy vs. a lasting sense of doubt or feeling of shame about having separate and different wishes from your family, having a will of your own. The third Eriksonian conflict involves the development of initiative vs. a permanent sense of guilt over making decisions that may not be what your community makes or may not be what other people have made. In your family, perhaps you came to decide for your own life, for example, that yes, you're going to work as much as you can and bring in money to the family but also continue on in school. Things other people may never have taken initiatives to make happen in your family before you become possible if you master well the emotional

struggle of the preschool period.

If you don't know how hard these nuclear conflicts are for an infant, toddler, and pre-school child, how can you be aware of their repercussions in the classroom? How can you be aware how marvelous that two letter word "No" is? Call a toddler in your pre-school classroom for lunch. He may well giggle "no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no" and runaway. Then he looks back at you with such joy as if to announce: "See what I can say! I can be myself. I can say no!" How do you know not to be upset by that and to actually take a certain pride in the child who is turning at two into a "no" saying creature. A "no" sayer can say "no" to gang behaviors, say "no" to delinquent friends who are going to stick up the corner gas station. A "no" sayer can say "no" to people who invite him to a beer blast the night before a test in high school. A "no" sayer can say "no" at age 6 if (God forbid) a rapist or an abductor tries to get that kid to come into a car by offering him ice cream. "No" saying is really important. NO to Heil Hitlers, No to regimes that are totalitarian on the political spectrum. "No" is a very important word. Of course if you're going to fight a toddler and say, "What do you mean, saying 'No' to your father", (I heard that indignant response in a shopping mall store) your toddler may well have troubles in life dealing appropriately with authority figures. Are you good at eavesdropping in shopping malls? They are wonderful places to eavesdrop. I learn more about child development than in many books that I have in my office. So, it is really important to understand, the "No" saying stage: What no means for a child and how to handle it.

Thus,another of the critical emerging issues is how much have you thought about the theories by which your children grow and theories which can help you organize your thoughts about children and your thoughts about staffing ECE classrooms. For example: Some people think, "Oh well, if we need more classrooms for very young children, such as 1's, 2's, 2's, and 4 year olds, we have lots of jobs open now but not enough for teachers of 5-6 year olds through 12 year olds. Let's just give those teachers jobs with the younger children. But teachers trained to teach elementary

school age children may not have any theoretical knowledge of how tiny children grow. An infancy teacher needs to know the difference between an older preschooler and a Piagetian sensory motor creature struggling to learn about object permanence and means/ends relationships, causality, and spatial relations. If you don't know early Piagetian developmental stages it's going to be very hard to move from teaching fifth grade to teaching 2 year olds.

Think about the issue of how we grow to conceptual understandings of the young child. How do we mix and match theorists in order to understand the child? Can we teach by simply making a downward extension of the elementary school model or should we more perceptively try for an upward extension of child development knowledge in order to understand all children at all stages of development from infancy onward. Shall we choose a particular theory and plan by that theory? Some programs are based on single theories. Psychoanalytic programs may be based only on the hydraulic Freudian model (pressures in; symptoms out). Behavior modification classrooms are based on Skinnerian or SR (Stimulus-Reinforcement) theory. Dr. Bettye Caldwell once said something very delicious to me. She said, "Never choose any one theory, Alice Honig. With theories, don't be a bride; always be a bridesmaid". And I thought that wasn't bad. Catch all the bouquets! Mix and match theories. Sometimes Bandura and Sears and the social learning model will really help me understand a child; what's going on with that child. Why would the child be behaving in ways that are frustrating and inappropriate in the classroom? Other times a Piagetian model helps me really to understand what looks like very peculiar behavior much better than any other theory will. Use your theories to understand and help your children grow. Don't become wedded exclusively to one theoretical model or another. Be flexible and perceptive. I'm thinking, for example, of a preschool teacher who had planned a collage lesson with paper plates. She wanted her children to use blunt scissors and cut out pictures from old magazines, paste each picture in the center

of a plate with glue, and then color around the edges. One child kept pasting the picture down and then lifting it off, pasting it down and lifting it off. Well those of you who understand sensory motor development will know that this was really partly an object permanence task for that child. Is the paste still there if you lift up the picture? Some teachers might not be attuned to this child's problem. They might think, "Well, this child is 2½ years old in my toddler classroom. He is bound to be out of the sensory motor period because my professor taught me that the sensory motor period lasts from 0 to 24 months. After that children are all at the early pre-operational stage of development." Oh really! I've found plenty of left-over sensory motor behaviors in myself and other grownups. And I have found lots of early pre-operational socially egocentric behaviors in some brilliant PhDs. Understanding Piagetian theory in a sophisticated way helps a teacher match teaching more accurately to the child's cognitive level. Teachers need matchmaking skills (Honig, 1983a).

On the other hand, Piaget may have nothing to tell you about what to do with that little "no, no, no" saying child who ran away when you said, "lunchtime" in the daycare room. And then you may need to call on Eriksonian theories in order to appreciate the amount of autonomy that child was showing. In that situation, by the way, I would ignore the "no". Use S-R theory). You might say, "Um, hamburgers, num-num, Carrots, um. Does that smell good!" Whereupon a toddler might gallop over, and knock you half over, climb into a seat, pound the table cheerfully, and say, "Meat, meat, meat!" That's probably the best way of treating the "no-no". Lure toddlers to lunch! Accept as much as possible a toddler's desperate need to control his or her own life, to assert budding selfhood. So often, toddlers just need to say "no". One mother was getting her first grader and her toddler ready in the morning so she could come to theories class at the University. She poured out the cold cereal, and then poured milk for her first grader. When she came over with the milk bottle to her toddler, he said, "No milk mommy". Mother reported: "I simply put the milk bottle down on the table without paying more attention to the child's refusal. Erikson teaches us to respect toddler struggles for autonomy.

Try to use theoretical ideas creatively to assist children with developmental tasks. A few minutes later on, after trying to eat dry cereal, the toddler called out, "Milk now, mommy". The mother said, "It's fantastic". It is. Once a child at that Eriksonian stage 2 understands that you recognize his right to have a will of his own, then she or he can find a way to behave more cooperatively with adults.

Our third issue then is, "How much are we learning about theorists and how much theory are we learning that we can apply?" Once I was teaching occupational therapists and nursing staff at a University medical school. Most of those in attendance had a master's degree. I spoke about child development theorists and how they could be useful to work with handicapped youngsters in classrooms or in medical settings (Honig, 1983b). Afterward, people came up to me and said, "You know, I had those courses. I had to study Piaget, Freud, and other theorists. But I didn't know what the theories had to do with handicapped kids we care for." So the issue is not just learning a little Freud, a little Piaget, and a little Erikson. What is vital is to learn what the ideas of various theorists mean in the lives of the children you serve.

Balancing your Knowledge Base as an Early Childhood Educator

Early child development and early childhood education depend on three major components: theory learning and understanding, research knowledge, and practical applications. With a three-legged stool, you know, if you cut off one of the legs, you can have a nasty fall! What are the proportions of training time that Early Childhood Education specialists should be devoting to each of those three areas? I know some programs in psychology departments (where early childhood educators are required to take the psychology component of their training) where much time in the infancy course is spent on learning about orienting reflexes of infants and the conditionability of the very young infant. Sometimes a course emphasizes cognition exclusively so that you learn a lot about transposition experiments, but you learn little about other aspects of the psychology of pre-school behavior. So the 4th issue is: how should we apportion our professional learnings with respect to theory, practical

application, and research knowledge? I find research knowledge extremely important and consider it "ammunition" for ECE workers. In our field, if you say "You shouldn't hit a child" there's bound to be someone in a class who says to you, "My daddy hit me when I was a kid and I've grown up just o.k." Has it happened to you? Yes. It has happened to me. Or somebody will say "If you don't take away privileges from a child and send him to bed without supper how does he know who's boss. My parents did that and I grew up fine". If you don't know research knowledge, you will simply continue to have what anthropologists call conflicts in values and beliefs with other adults. Values are judgments of good or bad (e.g., a good child is a quiet child). Beliefs are our ideas about what aspects of experience vary together (e.g.," n apple a day keeps the doctor away." "Spank a child; if you don't know what it's for, he will." "Picking up a baby will spoil him." "Intellectually gifted kids generally have rotten, sallow complexions and they are very weak and spindly and they can't do anything on the playground"). How do you convince people who hold such 'folk' beliefs and such values of what's good or bad? The best ammnuntion I know for this conflict is knowledge of relevant contradictory research data. I can't emphasize that enough. For example, if you know Mary Ainsworth's observational research of mothers and infants interactions in the home during the first year of life, then you will know that picking up babies in the early months of the first year of life tends to produce a baby who cries less and who uses more of other communication modes. The baby calls out, smiles, tugs at clothes, babbles, to get your attention. That child will be a more compliant child toward the end of the first year and the beginning of the terrible 2's. If you know Ainsworth's research (1952), you will have facts to answer someone who says, "You shouldn't pick up babies; it spoils them".

Clinical evidence and experience can help too. "If he has a toileting accident," one mother said to me, "I want you to switch him on the legs the way I do." When she had a toileting accident at 28 months, the child stood there rigid with fear. She went into hysterical sobbing because we didn't come over and switch her on the legs! Child

care staff were calm and solicitous and reassuring. By not punishing her physically we violated all of her expectations of what adults should be doing. So we need to know research data very well in order to counteract false myths.

Once we had a very gracious volunteer in the day care classroom. But she said, "Oh, don't pick up that pocketbook, Johnny. Pocketbooks are for little girls. That's not for a little boy." How glad we were to have a volunteer with an extra pair of hands. But sexist beliefs need to be counteracted, partly through research information, partly through exploring in staff development sessions the inappropriate beliefs and values we may bring from our past into the ECE classroom.

Research data provide ammunition. Knowledge based on evidence in the laboratory and in the field that can help to counteract some of the 'folk' beliefs and some of the expressed values that are contrary to what would be best for young children. But, how to apportion your childhood education curriculum in terms of making a decision, how much theory, how much research knowledge, how much practical experience...that's really an issue we have to hammer out. There are people who would say, "All you need is the practical experience. On hands experience—that's all you really need". And I agree we need a lot of that. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't hire anybody without saying "You're going to be in the classroom for a month and then we'll make a final hiring decision" because no matter how good someone sounds when they're talking to you, you really need to watch how their hands are on a child's body, how lovingly their eyes meet a child's eyes, whether the voice tones are warm or zoo-keeper voice tones: "Come over here, right away. Didn't you hear me calling?" The issue of the distribution of courses and experiences and knowledge bases requires a lot of intellectual hard thinking. In reality, it may be true that different folks have different needs in ECE. Some people may be full of theory already from a lot of undergraduate psychology courses. What they need, perhaps, more urgently is some on-hands internship experience, learning how to apply theory with young children. Decisions about apportioning training may have to be made on an individual basis.

Work with Individual Children or Work with Groups?

The fifth issue revolves around delivery of program in classrooms, and classroom treatment of children. Do you work with groups or do you work with individual children? If you mix and match methods, how do you mix and match? If we cut corners in programs for young children, as happened to Head Start in 1984, then programs receive the same amount of money, but now they are required to serve more children per group. Head Start was given an increase to cover inflation, but was told to spend less per child per year and to serve more children. What that means of course, is that one adult has to care for a larger group of children than before. You may have really tried hard in the past to give a lot of individual attention to children. But as groups are enlarged, teachers may feel pressured to work only with groups. This issue, then, revolves around teaching time devoted to the group and the individual. Which do you do more of?

How does a teacher meet individual needs, and yet not slight any child in the group. Having worked for a long time in daycare with very young children I worry about the adult interactions in the group of the youngest children - the 0 to 3 years range. What I've seen is that when a child is very passive and withdrawn and just chews on a piece of a toy or rocks by herself, then a teacher can ignore such an infant because she is not causing trouble like the baby who fusses a lot and demand attention. Sometimes a toddler who has just come into daycare is absolutely in a rage because mama has left him. He gets individual attention. The squeaky wheel gets greased. Lots of youngsters who act out get a lot of attention - even if sometimes it is negative attention!

How much should work with children be done in groups? What kinds of activities are comfortably carried out in what size groups? Should you always be reading to 5 to 10 children? Do you never ever get a time to put your arm around a little one on the couch, or two little ones and read a story just for them - and ask them to point to animals, and tell you about what's happening in the story, and let them

jabber on to you: "Yes, that's an apple...oh! Your mommy made applesauce? And she made apple pies too? And your baby brother got it all in his hair...and your mama got upset?" You haven't got off the "A" for Apple page...have you noticed that? But you're really able to tune into the individual child instead of always having reading time in large groups. In some centers they have a special librarian come in and read to children. In one center the "librarian", immaculately groomed, sat 3 feet away from the children. The preschoolers were sitting too close to one another in a huddled group so there was an elbow knock here and an elbow knock there, and a little kick here and a little kick there. The children were not really attending to the story, nor could they interact with the adult in terms of telling "My mama made applesauce" or "My baby brother bit a balloon and it busted" when you get up to "B" for balloon - once you get to page 2 on the storybook! In some daycare centers teachers feel that because they have only one reading period in the morning they should really read as many books as they can. One such teacher quickly went through 2 to 3 books with her group in 15 minutes and felt very pleased. She turned pages as fast as she could. Yet learning takes place better in more leisurely encounters between a child and an attentive adult. We need to think more about the whole balance of attention for the individual child vs. attention for the group.

What kinds of learnings do get done better in groups? If you have to do more teaching in groups, then what do you need to be aware of? I remember once watching a wonderful daycare worker. He held up cards with big circles, middle-size circles, and little circles. "Which one is this, what kind of circle is this? What do we call this one?" he asked his group of seven preschoolers. A little boy in the front row who was real smart quickly responded: "Middle-size circle". Donny, who was rather slow, in the back row of three children echoed: "Middle-size circle" with just about 2 seconds delay. Not bad huh, for copying. What do you have to do as a teacher? You have to hear that 2 second delay. You have to know that Donny yelled

out "middle-sized circle," but he really doesn't know the difference and you will need to do more individual work on size and shape with that child. Perhaps you can both trace out big circles in windmills with your arms so that you feel the difference kinesthetically. You can walk around a big circle with magic tape on the floor and walk around a little circle so that the child's walking helps him master the concepts of size. A lot of kinesthetic feedback helps. Maria Montessori used to teach about the importance of the 'hands-on' active experiences for young children's learning.

Think more systematically about balancing individual and group needs. Think about group reading time. Think about 'free-play' time. In some daycare centers, free-play time often means that children run around outdoors while teachers take a break and talk to each other. After all, the adults have been with kids all day, and isn't it wonderful to have a chance to socialize with an adult co-worker for awhile! Think about language experiences, gross motor experiences, fine motor experiences, sensory experiences, creative activities, housekeeping corners, block corners, reading times, walk-around-the-corner times. Brainstorm every bit of your program so that you have a feel for how group vs. individual needs are being served. Think about what things you are doing only in groups that require some more individual work. Think about what things you are doing only with individuals right now that you could teach with perhaps 2 or 3 children in a small group. Such was the case in the Sprigles' "Learning-to-learn" program in Florida (VandeRiet & Resnick, 1973). Based on their work, we, in the Children's Center program, used to take out two or three little ones who were between 4 and 5 years of age just to work with them on concept and social development skills in special smaller groups (Lally & Honig, 1977). In the Center we had mixes of large groups and a lot of individual work. But we felt that in the year before kindergarten, the children needed to learn to work with each other cooperatively in small groups. Teachers needed to check on where a child really was at in terms of knowing that red playdoh was red, or that the child could listen to sounds being made by a shake-shake toy, or two toys being hit

together, behind a cardboard screen - could listen really well and guess which items had produced the sound. Working with a smaller group for 15-20 minutes each morning, while a co-teacher takes care of a slightly larger group is a good way to fine-tune your knowledge of each child's conceptual and social skills. Teachers can take turns with the small learning groups. Small groups help advance child competencies. They also help us to monitor the effectiveness of our programs.

Finding Best Ways to Help Children Learn

The 6th problem has to do on your concept of how children learn. Do kids learn when we tell them things? "2 + 2 equals 4." "Birds live in houses called nests." Eskimos make igloos out of ice. "BM's belong in toilets and not on the floor." "We do not take down our pants in the supermarket." In didactic teaching the child is the passive recipient of knowledge. Actually most of our training in early childhood education and childhood development classes relies on this model. We professors stand in front and we talk. We tell you about research or a theory, or what's the lastest practical application. We expect you to process the verbal information coming in. But many adults and most children learn well by being active do-ers.

Have you ever tried to teach a pre-schooler that when you count a row from left to right you get the same number of marshmallows as when you count from right to left? And if you put them all in a circle and keep your thumb where you started you still get the same number of marshmallows whether you count around the circle in one direction or another. There's nothing like having a child do it and seeing the surprise on her face. Little children learn by acting on their environment. It's up to us, the grown-ups, to give them safe experiences. Safe experiences with materials. I have a marvelous day care slide of a 2-year old who has been using a funnel in water play, but instead of using the wide end of the funnel to pour his water from a coffee pot, he had upended the funnel and poured the water thru the narrow end. And he never noticed that it splashed all over his arms, of course, or got his apron wet. So there he is holding the funnel near the narrow end and waiting patiently (with his other hand under the

wide end) for the water to come through! It is beautiful if you give kids enough experiences with liquids and solids. That is how they learn the physics of liquids and solids. Physics is learned initially not in the high school laboratory but in the water play, block play, car play, body manipulations of very small children in the safe, nurturing environment of early childhood education settings.

On this issue of active experiences or teacher directed, teacher dominated experiences, you may then ask, "Is this an either/or issue?" And of course, it is not an either/or issue. There are things we learn because adults tell us. There are things we learn by listening - like rules in the classroom, for example, and reasons for rules. There are things we learn by observing an adult who shows us how to use materials or sing a song or share a big hunk of Playdough together. There are rule -learnings and there are other learnings that require active experiences. Active experiences can involve looking and listening as well as doing. You can provide visual experiences with guppies and beautiful goldfish for toddlers and infants. Do have the foresight to buy a top for the fish tank. Otherwise, toddlers can love up many of the fish unto the point of suffocation and out-of-tank outings for the fish! But, that doesn't mean that toddlers can't have wonderful experiences with an aquarium or terrarium. You will need to think of safety experiences also when you have small animals, not just safety for the children. Quite a few gerbils have expired in day care from peritonitis, because their stomachs were squeezed. Have you had that problem? Well, what we need to do is more training of ourselves; a teacher can hold a gerbil so the animal's stomach is protected and the children can still have a wonderful experience with the gerbil. Then the active experience - feeling that funny, furry, nose, those whiskers, the silkiness of the fur - there's nothing quite like that. Rather than being told, "Today we are having a lesson about gerbils. Here is a picture. A gerbil is a small animal with fur. It has 4 paws. Take a look at the nose. It wiggles sometimes. Take a look at the whiskers. Gerbils

have whiskers just like cats." Finished lesson. It's really important for young children to feel things with fingers and to experience them with cheeks, to feel how soft fur is, to crinkle leaves under foot, to squish playdoh.

Some of you may be concerned about health issues and be worried about toxicity. Finger paints and Playdoh can be made of safe ingredients. Also, if you put enough salt in the recipe for playdoh, toddlers who have put some in their mouth will spit it out fairly promptly when you put your hand out underneath their mouth and restate the rules for use. The whole emphasis on Piagetian learning through construction of reality, learning through active experiences with materials, does not have to be adversarial to a theory that kids can learn via teacher lessons. We need a variety of teaching styles and techniques. In some classrooms, active learning is considered the only mode or main mode because Piaget has written that children need active experiences. Therefore, the children are let loose with rolling logs or square logs, for example, so that they will discover active physics principles, or the fact that you can only roll a log if it has a round surface and not a cornered surface. They will discover the principle of the fulcrum by trying materials in the center or the ends of the teeter-totter board with a brick underneath it. But active learning is not necessarily the only mode. Some children do the same thing over and over and unless you, the teacher, do something special, ask something special, or suggest something special, some children are not going to induce physics principles such as the concept of the fulcrum by themselves. Teachers are very important! So I am neither in favor of a totally passive observer kind of teacher in the classroom, nor of a teacher-dominated classroom. I am in favor of your balancing. Active experiences should blend with teacher-led experiences.

One issue does trouble me. After our children from low education families in the Syracuse Project graduated from the program at 5 years of age, we observed some of the graduates in kindergarten and first grade and asked teachers about their behavior in classrooms. The children had been doing beautifully in

kindergarten. Kindergartens in our community have a lot of helpers in the classroom and classrooms are still very 'child centered'. In first grade, the classroom is far more teacher dominated. Teacher tells you what to do. No adult helpers are available and children have to be quiet and be the passive learners rather than active, inquiring learners. And since we had had a very open education model for our toddlers and pre-schoolers, our children were accustomed to asking questions, commenting, and getting lots of responsiveness from adults. One of the troubling findings was that, in the first grade classrooms, our graduates were using not only more positive methods to get learning information from teachers but also more negative methods than control group children who were matched for classroom, and school and teacher (Honig, Lally & Mathieson, 1982). It was very disconcerting for us to see that some of the active learning experiences we had provided had led children to expect that they could count on teachers to let them ask and talk a lot. In the first grade classrooms, the children used both more positive and more negative methods in order to get teacher attention, in order to get their needs met. However, with peers they were using more positive methods than control children. It is worrisome that the children were more aggressive with adults because their needs weren't being met in ways in which they had been met earlier in the early childhood education settings.

Interrelating Early Childhood and Elementary Education

The 7th issue has to do with the interface between early childhood education settings and public school settings. This relates to our research findings as reported above. Particularly, I wonder about how the early education setting with its emphasis on child focused experiences, active learning, attention to the individual needs of the child, will mesh with the teacher dominated classroom and with the enormous pressure of the elementary school curriculum which says, "You must learn to ready by age 6". Some children are ready to learn to read at 2½ years and some children are not ready 'til 8 years. What we need to have happen is for early

childhood educators to pay a lot more attention to language development in the early childhood education setting and for teachers in the elementary school to pay a lot more attention to the loving conditions under which early childhood learning of school subjects occurs. We need to borrow from each other.

Language is a powerful tool. Language rich experiences, language-mastery experiences pre-school may help ease the transition to elementary school. If you work with infants, I hope you are using the diapering table as your very best possible language experience opportunity (Honig, 1982a). You cannot diaper more than one behind at a time or have hands on more than one body. Therefore, diapering is a par-excellence language interaction experience in which to talk about: The toy in baby's hand, the nice clean diaper area, how handsome the face is, how good that tummy feels, how delicious the toes are, and who has a pretty nose or pretty tummy as you touch and clean up the baby. Be sure to accompany caregiving actions with language: "Up we go to the diapering table." "I'm going to sit you up now. Look how handsome you look." Language lessons need to be part and parcel of every routine and planned activity for young children. Early Childhood Education does not consist of just playing with blocks, or dressing up in the dress corner, or learning to cooperate in play. Getting a child ready for school is an important goal too.

The first thing elementary schools ask of a child in the early years is to learn to read and write. And so somewhere in your work you need to make writing marvelous: Oh, Celia, you can write C-E-E-E-E. That's your name. Wonderful! You need to write down the stories that children tell you; and you need to point to words, those mysterious squiggles on pages and read the squiggles aloud from The Cat And The Hat, and from other books, like Caps for Sale. And ask lots of questions. Read Are You My Mother? to preschoolers because you can ask so many good questions with that book. You may not get through the whole story in one day. That's o.k. Teachers will ask children to answer lots of questions in elementary schools. How good are your

children at answering questions? How good are they at asking questions? How prompt are you at answering their questions? Be a good question asker. Learn how to use Socratic questions. "What would we need to bake cookies? That's right! Last week we baked cookies; we baked cake. What did we need? "Sugar!" Oh yes, we always need sugar. What else do we need?" Socratic questions allow the child to conjure up from the reserves of his memory and retrieval system the information he has (Honig & Wittmer, 1982). Such open-ended questions are very different from convergent questions that simply require a yes or no answer. "Did you go potty?", "Have you been a good boy?" "What's the color of an orange popsicle?" By the way, this last question is legitimate for a discouraged toddler who is not sure of his colors. I always believe in giving answers in the beginning when kids are learning. Language enrichment and book pleasure experiences should be part and parcel of the power of the early education setting. And this is an issue because I'm not sure that many early childhood educators see themselves as powerful language teachers. I think they see the elementary school teacher as somebody who will build language art skills. A classroom should be full of labelings and pointings and talkings about and questionings and answerings and commentings and listenings.

Listen to children. I was listening on a lawn at the Children's Center one day. A group of children had tricycles. On another part of the playground the teacher was busy pushing children on a swing, and one teacher was at the slide, so the children would take turns, and learn how to slide down without bumping into someone else. The kids by themselves on the grass were having a ball! "There's a doggie poop on the lawn". "Drive your trike through it". "Look at the doggie poop, it's all squashed". These were very low income children who were supposed to have poor language skills. Wow! Did they have terrific language skills when the topic was an important thing like doggie poop on the lawn. So that I think you need to listen as well as to ask and to talk with and to read with young children.

One of the most powerful research findings that we have has to do with the fact that early reading to children and early talk with children is connected with later achievement in school. So many excellent researches in the field confirm that the more early language experience with books and conversations that little ones have, the better they do on their school achievement tests later on, such as the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test and the Wide Range Achievement Test. What good does it do in society to give all those tests to children if we have not built in the experiences necessary to ensure success in reading/learning for our children? For a child to believe that reading is something he or she wants to put his mind to, for a child to care to struggle to make sense out of those squiggly words in the books, the child has to have been read to every day and think of reading books together as the most wonderful activity a loving adult can do with you. Adults need to build in an absolute addiction to books. If a toddler sees you coming to the early childhood classroom door (because you're thinking of this place as a practicum for your work or you're a visitor to this particular daycare center), he will toddle toward you with a book, perhaps upside down, as if 'Ah ha, a nice lap, a nice smiling pair of eyes, a kind face, a person to read to me!" Hook your kids on books. Infants babble and talk to books. Toddlers turn the pages and they tell you what's in books and they know the books they like! They may not even understand all the ideas in a book but still be very fond of special books that they want read to them over and over again. One year, while visiting my 24 month old grandson, I heard him talking in his crib and I crept upstairs early in the morning. "How would you like me to read to you?" He wouldn't let me take him out of the crib. "But I can bring a book over and read to you," I offered. "I want Louis Pasteur and the Bad Microbes", said Daniel. And I said, "huh?" Because I didn't know there were books to read to toddlers about rabies vaccine. "Yes, it's in hard cover. It's over there!" said Daniel pointing to his bookshelf. So I sat companiably by his crib and read to

him about Louis Pasteur and the Bad Microbes. You need to give book power to little children, even though they are still in diapers. Every elementary school teacher in 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade will bless you for such work.

How can language enrichment and book pleasures be made to permeate early childhood education settings? Teachers need to use creativity to think of ways in which books, pictures on the walls, old magazines, story-telling time, street signs, food boxes and photos can be used to nourish young children's decoding and encoding language skills so that young children will be successful when they enter the elementary schools.

Prosocial Skill Building: An Important Curricular Goal

The 8th issue has to do with social skills building in early education. For too long school teachers have thought that their exclusive goal is to teach children what we call "cognitive" or "intellective" skills such as, reading, writing and arithmetic. Add computing skills nowadays, if you look at some of the laboratories for elementary school children. Yet, we live in a very violent society in our country. Therefore, I claim an issue we need to look at is; "What is your curriculum for pro-social skills?" "How well are you teaching children to live in a non-violent, cooperative world with one another?" "How much are you teaching them how to compromise, how to sit down and reason rather than fight or snub or hate another person?" Can children be taught in early childhood education settings to be altruistic, sharing, caring, helping, persons? So many children study in violent school systems where there are even police in the corridors. There's a lot of violence out in our society. We can't walk the streets in our own cities. What is there about the way we're rearing children that creates a climate of violence? An issue is, "What can be the optimal pro-social curriculum of an early childhood education program?" In a research review in Young Children on pro-social development (Honig, 1982b), there are references to important resources we can use in order to enhance the classroom climate for caring. One such resource is a book by Shure and Spivack called Problem Solving Techniques in Child Rearing. Their method is called Inter-personal Cognitive Problem Solving.

Shure and Spivack (1978) have trained mothers and teachers in inner-city preschools and kindergartens in their Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) techniques. Parents and teachers are taught to:

> ...enhance the child's ability to think through and solve problems and decide for himself what and what not to do. When, for example, a child hits another child or grabs a toy, he is asked why he did that, what the other child did or said, and whether or not his action was a good idea. On the basis of his response, the child may be reminded that hitting is one thing he can do and then be asked if he can think of something different he can do to solve the problem. (p.6)

This training program generates pro-social rather than forceful solutions to inter-personal problems. After three months, regardless of children's I.Q. in pre-school, kindergarten, or 1st grade classrooms where ICPS has been taught, children who had been overly impulsive, or overly inhibited, showed more awareness of others' feelings and more socially outgoing and well adjusted responses.

The most powerful of the ICPS mediators seems to be two skills: 1) the ability to conceptualize and generate multiple solutions to inter-personal problems and 2) the ability to anticipate the consequences of our actions. Many game dialogues are offered to illustrate adult use of ICPS techniques. For example:

Mother: Robin, who hit you?
Child: Natalie (a friend).
Mother: What happened? Why did she hit you?
(Mother elicits child's view of the problem.)
Child: She just hit me.
Mother: You mean she just hit you for no reason?
(Mother encourages child to think of causes.)
Child: I hit her first.
Mother: What for?
Child: She won't let me look at her book.
Mother: How did Natalie feel when you hit her?
(Mother guides child to think of feelings of others.)
Child: Mad.
Mother: Do you know why she doesn't want you to look at her book?
(Mother guides child to appreciate point of view of others.)
Child: No
Mother: How can you find out?
Child: I could ask her.
Mother: See if you can find out.
(Mother encourages child to seek facts and discover the problem.)
(later)
Child: She said I never let her see my books.
Mother: Now that you know why she said no, can you think of something you could do or say so she'll let you look at her book?
(Mother encourages child to think of solution.)

Child: I could stop playing with her.
Mother: What might happen if you do that?
(Child guided to think of consequences of her solution.)
Child: She might not be my friend.
Mother: Do you want her to be your friend?
Child: Yes.
Mother: Can you think of something different to do so she'll still be your friend?
(Mother encourages further solution thinking.)
Child: I could let her have one of my books.
Mother: That's a different idea.
(Shure and Spivack 1978, pp. 121-122)

Notice the adult has not said, "Wonderful honey, you found such a good pro-social solution to your problems." One thing I do like about ICPS is that you really keep forcing the child to realize hitting is one thing, not playing with a friend is another technique. There are multiple ways to deal with social problems.

If a child says, "I could ask him back for my toy," for example, often the child will say in the next breath, "but he'll never give it to me!" So children evaluate the effectiveness of their solutions themselves sometimes. The more teachers help children to generate alternative solutions to their own social conflicts, and the more you help them see the potential consequences of their actions the more you are helping children to develop the possibilities of solving their problems pro-socially.

Young children need adult planfulness for pro-social learning. On the playground of a day care center I visited, two little boys were really fighting at each other, hitting, smashing, pulling each other's hair. I separated them and said, "Boys, you seem so mad. What are you so mad at each other for?" And they both looked up at me and said, "huh?" Do you realize that they had had not experience in their daycare to say the feelings that they had, to say what would happen if they continued to hurt or hit, or to say anything about what was going on. What was the reason somebody started hitting? What were the feelings you had? What had happened before? What was happening now? We need to do a lot more work on developing a pro-social curriculum for early childhood education. We also need to gather ideas for positive discipline techniques that will enhance the cooperation of young children with adults.

Research has given us some pretty good ideas for interactions that promote child compliance and positive appropriate behaviors (Honig, 1982b, 1985a, 1985b).

How Can Teachers and Parents Work Together For Optimal Child Development?

The 9th issue is really a parent/teacher kind of issue. How on earth with the long daycare day, with the salary one is paid, with the amount of physical effort required (to carry little ones around, to find lost handkerchiefs that fell out of pockets or a lost truck that a child brought to the center and you don't know who has taken it from the child), how can teachers find time to relate with parents? Teachers can have such a wondrous variety of ordinary problems, such as: snack is late today, Gina is so tired when snack comes that she won't put her hands on the table and eat and is ready to fall asleep and she's too cranky to eat. How can you carry out the program component that every researcher and theorist feels is so crucial (Honig, 1979) to program success - work with parents, so that you're a team, working for the flourishing of this child.

This is a really tough issue. How can you have a quality parent component to your program...given the exhaustion of the day and the immense amount of work to be done. We can collect ideas from people about things that have worked for them. I have learned some pretty good techniques from staff. One director told me that one idea she found very useful was to have 5 extra meatloaf suppers made by the cook during the day and covered with a big piece of aluminum foil. The meatloaf pans were ready to warm up. She could then ask 5 parents to come for a parent meeting with her and/or the teacher, at the end of the daycare day, when it was pick-up time. She had to have a staff member stay for an extra hour to watch those 5 children. But because there would be no supper preparation time needed, parents could stay for an hour meeting. That's one idea that has worked in some daycare centers. Prepare just a few extra meals that can simply be reheated. Another idea that sometimes works is a spaghetti supper with a big salad and a lot of French or Italian

bread. This is an easy supper for a center staff to get made with some parent help. Parents are invited to come with their kids to eat together with staff. Show parents slides of their children in classrooms. You will get a chance to talk about the program and some of the goals you're trying to accomplish and some of the techniques teachers use that parents might like to know about such as positive discipline methods, active listening skills, and refocusing misbehaving children on more appropriate activities.

Another technique one program used was to tape a big, old sheet on the back of the school bus. With a magic marker the director crayoned the name of a "Parent of the Week". Each week another parent got this marvelous publicity in big letters just underneath the window of the bus that picked up the children. Parents would always ask "Why is he or she the parent of the week. What did they do?" The director and teachers were happy to reveal what parents had done for the school. It might have been bringing in old shirts for easel painting time. It might have been coming in and showing the kids how you make ice cream in an ice cream machine. It might have been simply providing an extra pair of hands to help out when you took a walk to the neighboring park. Whatever it was that the parent of the week had done, parents themselves learned more ideas about how to be helpful with young children in the early childhood education setting. Parents liked the idea of having their name on the back of a bus for a whole week, going around the city. These are a few of the ideas that people have shared with me. We all need to brainstorm and share with each other ideas and actions that have worked for increasing parent involvement and parent expertise. Ideas may not work all the time, but some ideas work for you sometimes.

Try ideas that may work. Some ideas, such as formal sit-down suppers for parents, where they have to pay a lot of money, usually do not work out. In the Syracuse Family Development Research Program, just taking 3 of our teenage mothers out to eat, in a small restaurant, a modest kind of food place, terrified some of the teen moms.

"What am I going to do with my gum? Where do you put gum? Can I put it under the table," asked one mother. Some ideas work better than others. For us, it would have been very inappropriate to have any kind of formal dinner for parents when some of our parents would have felt very uncomfortable and even uncertain of the skills needed for going to a modest short-order food place. Share positive aspects of your preschoolers with their parents. At the Children's Center we used to have a little piece of paper (about 3" x 5") that we safety-pinned to each child's outer clothing at the end of the day. We called it "Memo to Mommy." Each note had a piece of carbon paper so that staff could have a copy of whatever was written on the note. What went home was the outer page and the under page was put into our files. (The reason the note was labeled "Memo to Mommy" was because 85% of our children lived in teen-age single parent families). Your note could well read "Memo to Parents". This note was a marvelous communication mode for parents. "Johnny ate spinach today for the first time", "Janie really likes to play with Jennie. They seem to be good friends", "Harry did not bite anybody today". I got a prompt telephone call back on that one. "That ain't true; it couldn't be true." Yes, it was. For that day! "Sylvan build a 5 block tower. That's the first time he has stacked that many blocks." I'm not talking about more that one or two sentences; but the parents really appreciate your communication. They feel they are an integral, important part of the ECE program. We care enough to communicate.

Another communication mode is a big book at the entrance to the daycare center. A parent can write, "Suzie was up with diarrhea all night", even if diarrhea is spelled every which way. These important communications will make a parent feel better. You will know about how hard the night was and maybe you can say something at pick up time such as, "You must be very tired today . You really had a very rough night. We've tried to be so careful about nutrition and feeding today with your little one. Thank you so much for writing that for us!"

Be flexible in generating techniques to bring parents closer so that you are cooperators in helping young children flourish. You work as a team. In Dr. Joseph Stone's film, "Daycare for Kibbutz Toddler", you watch an Israeli mother in the morning hand over her little one to the daycare worker before she goes on to her work place. You realize that both adults are friends. That friendship is essential to explain the calmness with which the little one goes to the arms of the caregiver who is not the parenting one. No tears, no despair. Mothers and fathers are welcome and do come during their work breaks to visit the daycare center. A parent can pick up a little one and go around on an outside merry-go-round a little bit and visit with a child and then go back to work leaving the child again with the daycare worker.

Staff and parent teamwork depends on understanding and tolerance. Yet some of us work where there are court-ordered abused toddlers in daycare. We may feel so repelled by the assaults on their children that some parents carry out verbally and physically. Let's be honest! How can we build loving bridges to parents given some of the difficulties that we have in the classroom with kids? Nobody ever said that parent involvement was going to be easy. But adults only work toward positive self-changing in a climate of positive valuation, of our positive regard.

Are There Political Issues For Early Childhood Educators?

Politics! Training, finances, prestige! How involved should the Early Childhood Educator be in fighting for higher salaries, in writing letters to Senators and Congressmen, in getting television and newspapers to pay attention. We need to let our political representatives know loud and clear what childcare is like and how much more societal support it needs, in terms of professional training, in terms of salary levels, in terms of the ratios of numbers of children to adults. We need a lot of organizing and political skills to convince others of how important our field

is. Some people will always believe that bombs are more important than kids, that subsidies for tobacco are more important than children; that prisons are preferable to delinquency prevention through effective early childhood programs. Citizens ask for licensing of the car/automotive expert. They do not always ask for licensing of the Early Childhood Education expert. So our last issue is, just how much political work, just how much publicity work, just how much fighting for our rights to earn a decent wage are necessary? Early childhood workers need time to do home visits with families. They need time for going to training courses and conferences. They need money for books and materials. Political issues are crucial. They need to be discussed in centers and in training programs. Fortunately there are some wonderful organizations working for child advocacy such as the Children's Defense Fund (Telephone 800-242-602), the Black Child Institute, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in Washington, D.C. (Telephone 800-424-2460). What kinds of materials and pamphlets are available that can help you become more sensitized as to who needs to hear from you. Perhaps ECE directors can set out materials for writing a couple of letters to congressman during staff meetings or after your lunch period when you've put your 3's and 4's down for a nap.

Political clout helps. In my state we have Pre-Kindergarten programs that are funded through the state of New York as well as private and not for profit daycare and nursery programs. Once when there was strong danger that the Pre-K program would have its funds cut, the person in charge in the school system galvanized parents to ride down to Albany in busses. The politicians, by the end of that day, had reversed their stand. The programs stayed. Parent involvement components continued. Parents count! If you can, get parents to write with you, without worrying how they spell words. Spelling is not what counts! What counts is that parents are voters. Kids aren't! Politicians listen to parents because they vote. So, the issue here is not whether to do political/educational work, but just how much political work. How shall it be done? What shall we focus on? What issues? Only salary? The long

daycare day for children? Supports for working parents? Time off for parents to rear their children so that the long daycare day isn't as long as it is now? These are issues that need to be discussed. The answers, the best answers, will come from the collective, democratic process of citizens, parents, and early childhood educators working together. Along the way to solving these issues, I hope you continue to enjoy children and feel very proud of the work you do to help children become well motivated learners, responsible small citizens and loving friends to their peers, their families and their teachers.

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